

A quick response to the four comments posted on my article.

Thank you, Steve, Jessica, and B.J., for your observations, which seem to agree at least with the idea that Šebrle deserves a place among the greatest decathletes of the past century.

As for Pablo's comment, I know that you intend no disrespect to Šebrle; after all, you agree that he is among the best, if not the best. I find it hard to argue with you if we look at Thompson, O'Brien, and Šebrle purely based on invincibility in their prime. I also appreciate your willingness to modify your opinion if Šebrle wins in the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Indeed, the younger Clay and Krauchanka will be hard for Šebrle to defeat if they are healthy and focused. To prove your point, let's look at the table below.

<b>DECATHLON VICTORIES VS. APPEARANCES</b>			
<b>Factor</b>	<b>Thompson</b>	<b>O'Brien</b>	<b>Šebrle</b>
World Championships	1 of 2	3 of 3	1 of 7
Olympic Games	2 of 4	1 of 1	1 of 2
Totals	3 of 6	4 of 4	2 of 9
Winning Percentage	.500	1.000	.222

So let me restate on what grounds I base my claim that Šebrle stands alone: longevity, consistency, participation rate, and completion rate.

<b>MULTI-EVENT PERFORMANCES <sup>1</sup></b>			
<b>Factor</b>	<b>Thompson</b>	<b>O'Brien</b>	<b>Šebrle</b>
Seasons during Career	18	19	17
Seasons Participated	16	13	17
Seasons Missed	2	6	0
Seasons Participated	.889	.684	1.000
Multi-event Appearances	36	29	85
Multi-event Completions	27	23	81
Completion Percentage	.750	.793	.953
Appearances Per Season Participated	2.2	2.2	5.0
High-quality Performances <sup>2</sup>	18	17	60
High-quality Performance Percentage	.500	.586	.706
Age at Last Completed Multi-event	30	32	32

1. Multi-events performances include the decathlon and heptathlon but not exhibition meets such as the one-hour decathlon.
2. For high-quality performances, I have used the **DECATHLON2000** standard of 8,000-point decathlon performances and 5,800-point heptathlon performances.

In these categories, Šebrle is peerless. No matter how his career ends, what he has accomplished has raised the standards for all decathletes who follow him. What I appreciate most about Šebrle is his attitude about showing up—regardless of the competition or his recent performance. He loves being there. He shows up. He hangs in there even when he is far behind.

Here's a decathlete with an attitude. I'm sure it crosses Šebrle's mind the night before Day 1 saying, "I can't compete with Clay's 100 meters and Krauchanka's high jump," and before Day 2 saying, "Clay's discus and Krauchanka's hurdles are going to be tough to beat." Incidentally, notice how gracious Šebrle is by training with Clay and by saying that Krauchanka is the future of the decathlon after losing to him in Gotzis 2007.

Yet, the Czech stays tough—time after time. Surely Clay and Krauchanka must be haunted the day before their competitions with this thought: "I'd better not get the slightest injury or make even one mistake because a consistently healthy, focused, and confident Šebrle is not far behind. Incidentally, Tomas Dvorak, Erki Nool—both retired—used to say the same thing!